

2011-2012 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 7
November 28, 2011

Science Report:

1. **Penguins:** The first gentoo penguin chick at Copa hatched this week on Wednesday (11/30) in one of our study sites. Adélie penguin chicks continue to hatch, with 46% of our study nests now with chicks.

We paid another visit to the chinstrap penguin colonies at Demay, Uchatka, and Patelnia on Tuesday (11/29) to take egg measurements and conduct nest censuses. Just like with the Adélie and gentoo penguins earlier this season, we measured both eggs (length, width, and weight) in fifty nests. The volumes and weights of the eggs are indicative of the early breeding condition of the females. Our 2011-12 measurements were slightly lower than the 21-year average.

The chinstrap penguin nest census numbers indicate that the population in our study area continues to decline after a brief period of stability. We counted 971 pairs occupying nests this year, a 5% decline from the mean of the last four years.

2. **Skuas:** Skuas: This week marks our first complete check of every skua territory in our study area on the western shore of Admiralty Bay. Currently almost 1/3 of the 159 active skua territories followed have eggs.

On Thursday (12/1,) the first four geolocator (GLS) tags were attached to breeding Copa brown skuas. The GLS tags will stay on for the next year, recording winter migration for 10 pairs of brown skuas holding penguin territories.

3. **Seals & Whales:** Our weekly seal census of the beaches from Copa to Point Thomas yielded 8 Elephant Seals, two of which were recently weaned pups, and 2 Weddell Seals. No census was done at Demay or Patelnia due to the weather and time.

Two Humpback Whales were seen diving and feeding on Monday (11/28) and then again on Friday (12/2) exiting the bay. On Sunday (12/4), two Humpback whales, one adult and one calf, were observed repeatedly breaching ~250 meters off of shore.

4. **Other:** On Monday (11/28), the R/V *Laurence M. Gould* picked up Sue and sailed for Punta Arenas. The weather was unusually nice and there were no delays. While the ship was here, the electronic and communication techs on board came ashore to repair our Iridium email system, which had been having problems since our arrival. Big thanks to Bede, George, & Chris!



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We collected 30 chinstrap penguin eggshells at Patelnia for Mike Polito, a PhD student working primarily on stable isotopes and penguin diet.

Weekly Weather:

We were hit with strong winds from the South on Tuesday evening (11/29) after several days of relatively calm weather. We had a small lull on Thursday (12/1) evening that was followed by more strong winds on Friday (12/2) coming from the east. Saturday (12/3) was sunny with almost no wind. Very little precipitation and nearly all of the snow banks have melted away.

The 2011-12 Copa Field Team
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